

February 10, 2016

TESTIMONY – Appropriations Hearing – DECD – Tourism

Dear Members of the CGA Appropriations Committee:

I am writing to you as Chairman of the Eastern Connecticut Regional Tourism District (ECRTD) to express my concern regarding the Governor's proposed cuts to the 2016-2017 Budget. Of greatest concern is the potential elimination of the Tourism Districts.

The ECRTD promotes tourism related attractions, products, services and events within the ECRTD – which covers 42 towns and thousands of businesses covering the eastern portion of Connecticut. In this past year, the small district staff has: handled over 12,000 direct inquiries for information, distributed 110,000 Visitor Guides, increased its social media reach by 30%, appeared in 44 different media outlets, ran 20 mini-promotions for spring/summer/fall, coordinated Familiarization tours for groups from Germany, Italy & United Kingdom, Initiated a brochure distribution program with the Windham Chamber and the Last Green Valley, Developed 120 leads from attending 4 trade shows, Distributed 11 RFP's to Mystic Country hotel properties for 4,093 overnight rooms, performed outreach in the form of Brochure Swaps, Business of Tourism newsletter and an industry-based website: www.Industry.MysticCountry.com and much more.

The ECRTD also is an active partner with the State Office of Tourism (COT). Most recently, the ECRTD has worked closely with the COT in the development of the new Tourism website. ECRTD has supplied listings on more than 500 individual sites and businesses and thousands of photos for inclusion on the website. Each listing has been verified and prepared for electronic uploading to the website. The COT does not have the staff to review and update each listing. Nor does it have the knowledge of all of the smaller tourism related businesses. The ECRTD has agreed to be the curator of all of the information from eastern CT to the state's website. If the Districts were to be eliminated, the curation for the eastern Connecticut portion of the website would be considerably diminished. The smaller venues would lose out as they do not have the capability to manage their own social media and electronic advertising. Familiarity with all of the tourism assets, large and small, in eastern CT is why the District's role has been critical in generating billions of dollars for the state. It would be penny-wise and pound foolish to eliminate the ECRTD and the other two districts.

Please do all that you can to insure that the Districts remain funded so they can remain valuable contributors to Connecticut's robust and growing Tourism Industry.

Respectfully,

Pamela Aey Adams

Chairman